God
940.477
Hay/Get
99346

Digitized with financial assistance from

HT Parekh FOUNDATION

An Initiative by HDFC WITH YOU, RIGHT THROUGH

on 27 November, 2018

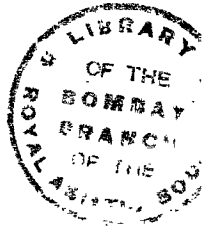
GETTING TOGETHER

GETTING TOGETHER

BY

IAN HAY

AUTHOR OF "THE FIRST HUNDRED THOUSAND,"
"A SAFETY MATCH," ETC.



99346

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO
MCMXVII

1917

God
940.471
Hay/Get
99346

Copyright, 1917, *by*
IAN HAY

All rights reserved, including that of translation into foreign languages, including the Scandinavian

FOR several months it has been the pleasant duty of the writer of the following deliverance to travel around the United States, lecturing upon sundry War topics to indulgent American audiences. No one—least of all a parochial Briton—can engage upon such an enterprise for long without beginning to realize and admire the average American's amazing instinct for public affairs, and the quickness and vitality with which he fastens on and investigates every topic of live interest.

Naturally, the overshadowing subject of discussion to-day is the War, and all the appurtenances thereof. The opening question is always the same. It lies about your path by day in the form of a newspaper man, or about your bed by night in the form of telephone call, and is simply:

"When is the War going to end?"

(One is glad to note that no one ever asks *how* it is going to end: that seems to be settled.)

The simplest way of answering this new question is to inform your inquisitor that, so far as Great Britain is concerned, the War has only just begun—began, in fact, on the first of July 1916; when

the British Army, equipped at last, after stupendous exertions, for a grand and prolonged offensive, went over the parapet, shoulder to shoulder with the soldiers of France, and captured the hitherto impregnable chain of fortresses which crowned the ridge overlooking the Somme Valley, with results now set down in the pages of history.

Having weathered this conversational opening, the stranger from Britain finds himself, as the days of his sojourn increase in number, swept gently but irresistibly into an ocean of talk—an ocean complicated by eddies, cross-currents, and sudden shoals—upon the subject of Anglo-American relations

over the War. Here is the substance of some of the questions which confront the perplexed wayfarer :—

1. "Do your people at home appreciate the fact that we are thoroughly pro-Ally over here?"

2. "How about that Blockade? What are you opening our mails for—eh?"

3. "Would you welcome American intervention?"

4. "What do you propose to do about the submarine menace?"

5. "You don't *really* think we are too proud to fight, do you?"

6. "Are you in favour of National Training for Americans?"

7. "Do you expect to win outright,

or are both sides going to fight themselves to a standstill?"

And

8. "Why can't you Britishers be a bit kinder in your attitude toward us?"

LET us take this welter of interrogation categorically, and endeavour to frame such answers as would occur to the average Briton to-day.

But, first of all, let it be remembered that the average Briton of to-day is not the average Briton of yesterday. Three years ago he was a prosperous, comfortable, thoroughly insular Philistine. He took a proprietary interest in the British Empire, and paid a munificent salary to the Army and Navy for looking after it. There his Im-

perial responsibilities ceased. As for other nations, he recognized their existence; but that was all. In their daily life, or national ideals, or habit of mind, he took not the slightest interest, and said so, especially to foreigners.

"I'm English," he would explain, with a certain proud humility. "That's good enough for yours truly!"

This sort of thing rather perplexed the American people, who take a keen and intelligent interest in the affairs of other nations.

But to-day the average Briton would not speak like that. He will never speak like that again. He has been outside his own island; he has made a number of new acquaintances. He has been

fighting alongside of the French, and has made the discovery that they do not subsist entirely upon frogs. He has encountered real Germans, at sufficiently close quarters to realize that the "German Menace," at which his party leaders encouraged him to scoff in a bygone age, was no such phantom after all. Altogether he is a very different person from the complacent, parochial exponent of the tight-little-island theories of yester-year. He has encountered things at home and abroad which have purged his very soul. Abroad, he has seen the whole of Belgium and some of the fairest provinces of France subjected to the grossest and most bestial barbarity. At home, he has seen

inoffensive watering-places bombarded by pirate craft, which came up out of the sea like malignant wraiths and then fled away like panic-stricken window-smashers. He has seen Zeppelins hovering over close-packed working-class districts in industrial towns, raining indiscriminate destruction upon men, women, and children. In fact, he has seen things and suffered things that he never even dreamed of, and they have broadened his mind considerably.

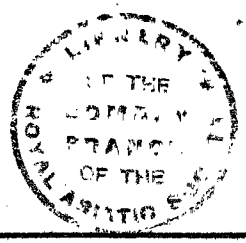
Last year, under stress of these circumstances, the average Briton relinquished his age-long propensity to "let George do it," and evolved a sudden and rather inspiring sense of personal responsibility for the safety and welfare

of his country. He no longer limited his patriotism to the roaring of truculent choruses at music-halls, or the decorating of his bicycle with the flags of the Allies. He went and enlisted instead. Now he has faced Death in person—and outfaced him. He has ceased to attach an exaggerated value to his own life. Life, he realizes, like Peace, is only worth retaining on certain terms, the first of which is Honour, and the second Honour, and the third Honour.

Finally, he regards the present War as a Holy War—a Crusade, in fact. He went into it with no ulterior motives: his sole impulse was to stand by his friends, France and Belgium, in the

face of the monstrous outrage that was being forced upon them. He is out, in fact, to save civilization and human decency. Consequently he finds it just a little difficult to understand how a warm-hearted and high-spirited nation *can* be expected to remain "neutral even in thought."

With this much introduction to the man and his point of view, we will allow him to speak for himself.



"Do I realize that you are pro-Ally over here? Well, somehow I have always felt it, but now I know it. When I get home I shall rub that fact into every one I meet. What our people at home don't grasp is the fact that America is inhabited by two distinct races—Americans, and others. The others appear to me—mind you, I'm only giving you a personal impression—to consist either of alien immigrants who have not yet absorbed their new nationality, or professional anti-Ally pro-

pagandists, or people of mixed nationality with strong commercial interests in Germany, whose heart is where their treasure is. These make a surprising amount of noise, and attract a disproportionate amount of attention: but I know, and I intend the people at home to know, that the genuine American is with us in this business heart and soul.

"What's that? The Blockade? Yes, I want to talk to you about that. I take it you will admit that a blockade is a justifiable expedient of war. There have been one or two of them in history. In the American Civil War, for instance, the North established a pretty successful blockade against the Southern ports.

British cotton ships were everlastingly trying to run through that cordon. In fact, I rather think we exchanged a few cousinly notes on the subject. Of course blockades are irksome and irritating to neutrals. But we look to you here to endure the inconvenience, not merely as one of the chances of war, but rather to show us that you in this country do recognize and endorse the ideal for which we are fighting. We *are* fighting for an ideal, you know: I think the way the old country came into this War, all unprepared and spontaneously, just because she felt she *must* stand by her friends, was the finest thing she has ever done. Of course no sane person expected America

to saddle herself gratuitously with a European War—without good and sufficient reason, that is—but we in England would like to feel that your acquiescence in the inconveniences caused by our blockade is your contribution to the cause—your slap on the back, signifying :—Go in and win!

"Open your mails? Yes, I'm afraid we do. And we find a good lot inside them! Do you know, there is a great warehouse in London filled from top to bottom with rubber, and nickel, and other commodities for which the Hun longs, disguised as all sorts of things—rubber fruit, for instance—taken from the most innocent-looking parcels —all despatched from the United States

to neutral countries in touch with Germany? But we are most punctilious about it all. Every single article retains its original address-label, and will be forwarded direct to its proper consignee, as soon as the War is over. Can you beat that?

"Would we welcome Intervention? My dear sir, is it likely? Supposing *you* had been caught entirely unprepared, and had been sticking your toes in for two years—fighting for time and playing a poor hand pretty well—and were at last ready to hit back, and hit back until you had rendered your opponent incapable of further outrage, and were in a fair way to fix this War so that it never could happen again—

would you welcome Mediation, or offers of Mediation? I think not.

"Submarines? We aren't attaching *too* much importance to submarine frightfulness. It is true we have lost a number of merchant ships, and that a number of innocent lives have been sacrificed. But let us put our hearts in the background for the present and look at the matter from the economical and military point of view. We have lost, in twenty-seven months, about one-tenth of our original merchant fleet. Against that you have to set the fact that we have been steadily building new merchant ships during the same period. The dead loss of merchandise involved amounts to about

one-half per cent. of the total value—ten shillings in every hundred pounds; or fifty cents per hundred dollars. That won't starve us into submission.

"But the Germans will build more and more submarines? Very probably. Still, I think we can leave it to the British and French Navies to prevent undue exuberance in that direction. Our sailors have not been exactly garrulous during this War, but I think we may take it that they have not been entirely idle. Has it ever occurred to you that although there are hundreds of Allied warships patrolling the ocean to-day, you hardly ever hear of one being torpedoed by a submarine? Passenger ships and freight ships suffer

to the extent I have quoted, but not the warships. Why is that? Don't ask me: ask Jellicoe! But it rather looks as if the submarine, as an instrument of naval warfare—as opposed to a baby-killing machine—had rather failed to deliver the goods.

"The *Deutschland?* I take off my hat to Captain Koenig: he is a plucky fellow. The *U* 53? I have no remarks to offer, except to repeat my previous reference to baby-killing machines. As for the presence of these two vessels in American waters—in American ports—I won't presume to offer an opinion. Still, not long ago the *U* 53 sank six British or neutral vessels off the American coast, just outside territorial waters.

Fortunately for the passengers, an American cruiser was in the neighbourhood, to guard against violation of American waters, and picked them up. But the whole incident looks to me like a deliberate German plan to jockey an American cruiser into becoming a German submarine tender.

"Let me see—what else? Too proud to fight? Not much! We know the American people too well. Besides, we suffer from politicians ourselves, and know what political catch-phrases are. So don't let that worry you.

"National Training for America? There I am neither qualified nor entitled to offer advice. I know the difficulties with which the true American

has to contend in this matter. I know that this vast country of yours is more of a continent than a country, and that so long as your enormous tide of immigration continues, it will be a matter of immense difficulty developing a national sense of personal responsibility. I also know that your Middle West is inhabited by people, many of whom have never even seen the sea, who are rendered incapable, by their very environment, of realizing the immensity of the external dangers which threaten their country. These must see things differently from the more exposed section of the community, and I see how dangerous it would be to enforce upon them a measure which they regard as ridiculous.

But on this great subject of Preparedness, I can refer you to the case of my own country—not as an example, but as a warning. *We* were caught unprepared. In consequence, we had to sacrifice our best, our very best, the kind that can never be replaced in any country, just because they hurried to the rescue and allowed themselves to be wiped out, while the country behind them was being aroused and prepared. That is the price that we have paid, and no ultimate victory, however glorious, can recompense us for that criminal waste of the flower and pride of our youth and manhood at the outset.

"Do we expect to win the War outright? Yes, we do."

It is true that the Central Powers have recently succeeded in devastating another little country, though they have not destroyed its army. On the other hand, during the past few months the Allied gains on the Somme have included, among other items, a chain of fortresses hitherto considered impregnable, four or five hundred pieces of artillery, fourteen hundred machine-guns, and about ninety-five thousand unwounded German prisoners. Moreover, the French at Verdun have regained in a few weeks all the ground that the Crown Prince wrested from them, at the price of half a million German casualties, in the spring of 1916. German colonies have ceased to exist;

German foreign trade is dead; the German Navy is cooped up in Kiel harbour; and Germany is so short of men that she has resorted to outrageous deportations from Belgium in order to obtain industrial labour. On the other hand, our supply of munitions now, at the opening of 1917, is double what it was six months ago, and our new armies are not yet all in the field. The British Navy, despite all losses, has increased enormously both in tonnage and personnel. So I don't think we are fought to a standstill yet.

"Yes, you are right. All this bloodshed is dreadful. But responsibility for bloodshed rests, not with the people who end a war, but with the people who

began it. As for discussing terms of peace now, what terms *could* be arranged which Germany could be relied upon to observe a moment longer than suited her? Have you forgotten the way the War was forced on the world by Prussian militarism? The trick played on Russia over mobilization? The violation of Belgian neutrality? Malines, Termonde, Louvain? The official raping in the market-place at Liége? The *Lusitania?* Edith Cavell? The Zeppelin murders? Chlorine gas? The deportations from Belgium and Lille? Wittenburg typhus camp, where men were left to rot, without doctors, or medicine, or bedding? How can one talk of "honourable peace" with such a gang of criminal

lunatics? Ask yourself who would be such a fool as to propose to end a war upon terms which left the safety of the world exposed to the prospect of another outbreak from the same source?

"You, sir? *Why can't you people in England be a bit kinder in your tone to us here in America?* Ah, now you are talking! Let us get away from this crowd and go into the matter—get together, as you say."

So the average Briton and the average American retire to a secluded spot, and "get together." The American repeats his question:

"Why can't your people over there be a bit kinder? Why can't you consider our feelings a bit more? You haven't been over and above polite to us of late—or indeed at any time."

"No," admits the Briton thoughtfully, "I suppose we have not. Politeness is not exactly our strong suit. In

my country we are not even polite to one another!" (Try as he will, he cannot help saying this with just the least air of pride and satisfaction.) "But I admit that that is no reason why we should be impolite to other nations. The fact is, being almost impervious to criticism ourselves, we naturally find it difficult to avoid wounding the feelings of a people which is particularly sensitive in that respect."

"Very well," replied the American. "Now, we want to put this right, don't we?"

"We do," replies the other, with quite un-British enthusiasm. "No one who has spent any time as a visitor to this country could help——"

"Why then, tell me," interpolates the other, "what is at the back of your country's present resentful attitude towards America?"

The Briton ponders.

"Didn't some one once say," he replies at last, "that 'he that is not for us is against us'? That seems to sum up the situation. We, on our side, are engaged in a life and death struggle for the freedom of the world. We know that you are not against us; still, considering the sacredness of our cause, and the monstrous means by which the Boche is seeking to further his, we feel that you have not stood for us so out and out as you might. Only the other day your Government

announced that in their opinion it was time that both sides stated plainly what they were fighting for! Now——".

The other checks him.

"Don't you go mixing up the officially neutral American Government," he says, "with the American people, or the American people with the inhabitants of America. In many districts of America, the balance of power lies with people who have only recently entered the country, and who have not yet become absorbed into the American people. As for our present Government, it was put into power mainly by the people of the West—people to whom the War has not come home in any way—and the Government, having to consider the

wishes of the majority, naturally carries out the instructions on its ticket. That is how I, as an average American, sense the situation. However, that is not the point. Listen!

"You say that America has not helped you very much? Let us consider the ways in which America *could* have helped. Military aid? Well, of course that is out of the question so long as we remain neutral, as we agreed just now we certainly ought to remain. Still, there are more than twenty-five thousand American citizens serving in the Allied Armies to-day. Did you realize that?"

"I did not," says the Briton, interested.

"Well, it is true. There are battalions in the Canadian Army composed almost entirely of men from the United States. Others are serving in the French or British Armies. Then there is the American Flying Corps in France."

"Yes, I have heard of them. Who has not? Proceed!"

"Industrial help, again. We are making munitions for you, night and day. It is true that we are being paid for our trouble; but let me tell you that we are making no munitions for Germany, and would not do so, money or no. The same with financial help. Loan after loan has been floated in this country for the Allied benefit.

How many loans have been raised for Germany? Not one! That is not because German credit is so bad, but because no true American will consent to lend his money to such a cause. Believe me, the attempt has been made, and strong influence brought to bear, more than once, but the result has been failure every time.

"Red Cross Work, again. There are hundreds of Americans driving ambulances in the Allied lines to-day, and hundreds of American women working in Allied hospitals. There are complete hospital units over there, equipped and maintained by American money and American service. Have you ever

heard of the Harvard Unit, for instance ? "

" Vaguely. Tell me about it."

" Well, I mention the Harvard Unit because it was about the first; but others are doing nobly too. Let Harvard serve as a sample. At the outbreak of the War, Harvard put down ten thousand dollars to equip and staff the American Ambulance Hospital in Paris. Then, in June 1915, Harvard took over one of your British Base Hospitals, with thirty-two surgeons and seventy-five nurses. That hospital has been maintained by Harvard folk ever since; they go out and serve for three months at a time. Harvard also sent an expedition to fight typhus in Serbia.

Harvard's casualty list, in consequence, has grown pretty long. Not a bad record for one neutral University, eh? I don't seem to remember your Oxford or Cambridge sending out a medical unit to help us, when we were fighting for a moral issue too, away back in the 'sixties under Lincoln."

"I knew nothing of all this. People at home must be told," says the Briton earnestly.

"Or," continues the American, "we can take the work of the American Ambulance Field Service. The American Ambulance Field Service with the Armies of France has carried over seven hundred thousand wounded since the beginning of the War; their sections

and section leaders have been sixteen times cited for valuable and efficient work; fifty-four of their men have been given the Croix de Guerre for bravery, and two the Medaille Militaire. Three have been killed. The Society has at present over two hundred ambulances at the front, besides staff and other cars attached to different sections. This Service, which, at the beginning of the War, was a subsidiary part of the American Ambulance Hospital at Neuilly, has for the past year been self-supporting, and, although still co-operative with the Hospital, has its own administration and headquarters, and its own maintenance fund. If you require any further information on the subject, read *Friends*

of France,[1] or *Ambulance No.* 10,[2] both of which books will stir you not a little.

"Talking of books, if you want to read a genuine American's opinion of the Allies and their cause, read *Their Spirit,*[3] by Judge Robert Grant. And if you want to know what another prominent American, who formerly admired and reverenced Germany, thinks of Germany now, read Owen Wister's *Pentecost of Calamity.*[4] Or, if you want

[1] *Friends of France:* The Field Service of the American Ambulance described by its members. (Houghton Mifflin Co., $2.00. Limited Edition, $10.00.)

[2] *Ambulance No.* 10. By A. Buswell. (Houghton Mifflin Co., $1.00.)

[3] *Their Spirit:* Some impressions of the English and French during the summer of 1916. By Robert Grant. (Houghton Mifflin Co., 50c.)

[4] *Pentecost of Calamity.* By Owen Wister (Macmillan Co., 50c.)

a complete exposure of German aims and methods in this War, read James M. Beck's *The Evidence in the Case.*[1]

"Now a word concerning War Relief Societies in general. (There's more to hear than you thought, isn't there?) I cannot possibly give you details about them all, because their name is Legion. For instance, this printed list contains the names of a hundred and ten such societies; and there are others. As you see, it covers Armenian, Belgian, British, French, Italian, Lithuanian, Persian, Polish, and Russian Relief enterprises of every kind. German Relief Societies? Yes, throughout the United

[1] *The Evidence in the Case.* By James M. Beck. (Putman, $1.00.)

States there are eleven German and Austrian Societies altogether; but they are all under purely Teutonic management, as a glance at the names of their supporters will show. America, as such, stands aloof from them.

"Let us have a look at the purely British Relief Societies, which naturally will interest you most. There is the American Women's War Hospital at Paignton, Devonshire, directed by Lady Paget, herself an American, and supported by American contributions. It is a far cry from America to Australia, but there is an Australian War Relief Fund in America. Then take the British War Relief Association of America. This Association occupies an entire floor

in a lofty building on the busiest stretch of Fifth Avenue. All day and every day they work away, cutting surgical dressings at the rate of nine thousand yards a week. They also collect and despatch comforts of every kind, from motor ambulances to antiseptic pads. The rent of their premises is eight thousand dollars a year; but they get the whole place free. Their landlord, an American citizen, has given them that floor for the duration of the War, as his contribution to the fund. Isn't that pretty fine? Again, there is an American branch of your own Prince of Wales's fund. There is a United States Guild for British Soldiers' Comforts; there is an Indian Soldiers' Fund

Committee, and many others. These, as you see, are purely pro-British organizations, but naturally your country also benefits under all general schemes of Allied Relief. Last summer, for instance, a great bazaar was held in New York in aid of Allied War Charities, and over half a million dollars were cleared. Another bazaar, held more recently in Boston, raised over four hundred thousand dollars. Another, in Chicago, was equally successful. And so the tale goes on. France and Belgium, of course, receive the lion's share of American sympathy, as being invaded countries, but I have told you enough to show what we are trying to do for Great Britain too. We are somewhat

handicapped, however, by the fact, firstly, that Great Britain is not exactly what one would call a gracious receiver of benefits, and secondly, that the man in the street over here regards your country as too fabulously rich to require relief of any kind. But, after all, it is the spirit of good-will which counts and you have all ours.

"Well, the list which I have shown you will give you some idea of the big forces which are working for you over on this side. But big forces are made up of little forces. As we say in this country, it is the little things that tell. All over America I could show you little sewing-meetings and social gatherings which have got together for

the purpose of preparing clothing and medical comforts for the Allies. Even in cities like Milwaukee and Cincinnati, which have the reputation of being overwhelmingly Teutonic, there exist very efficient and plucky Allied Relief Societies which are carrying on in the face of open hostility. There is hardly a village or township that does not possess such a society. You have a song in England about 'Sister Susie sewing Shirts for Soldiers.' Well, over here in the States, your cousin Susie is doing precisely the same thing. She is doing it so extensively that it has been found necessary to establish a great Clearing House in New York to deal with the gifts as they come

in, sort them out, and forward them to their destinations. The Clearing House also knows where to stretch out its hand for particular commodities. For instance, if there is a shortage of absorbent cotton, the Clearing House sends an appeal to Virginia for some more, and Virginia sends it. Here is a copy of the monthly bulletin. They appear to have been busy. You notice that, during one period of seven days last month, this Clearing House handled over a thousand cases of material a day.

" Yes, a Clearing House like this calls for some organization and labour. Who supply that ? A number of American business men, each of

whom has decided to run his business with his left hand for the present, leaving his right hand free for War Relief.

"Besides gifts in kind, these same organizations send gifts in money. Between seventy and eighty of the leading clubs in America have formulated a scheme under which members who feel so disposed may have five dollars or so debited to their monthly bill, to be devoted to Allied Relief work. During the last three months about eighty thousand dollars has been raised and distributed by the Clearing House from this source.

"Our Relief work is both collective and individual. At one end of the

scale you find a scheme for raising a hundred million dollars to maintain and educate Belgian and French orphans. At the other, I could show you a poor woman in Boston who is living on a mere pittance, because she gives every cent that she can possibly spare to Allied Relief. I know many American business men who cross the Atlantic several times a year : on these occasions they seldom fail to take with them, as part of their personal baggage, a trunk stuffed with surgical dressings, rare drugs, and the like. Again, do you know who presented to your nation St. Dunstan's, the great institution for blinded soldiers in Regent's Park, London ? An American citizen. So you see, here we

are, the American people, the greatest race of advertisers in the world, doing all this good work, and saying nothing whatever about it. Doesn't that strike you as significant?"

"It strikes me as magnificent," says the Briton.

"Well," rejoins the other, "I don't allow that it is magnificent, but it is pretty good. We might do more—ten times more. For instance, all our contributions to Belgian relief don't amount to more than the merest fraction of what France and Great Britain, in the midst of all the agony and impoverishment of their own people, have contrived to give. Still, I think I have said enough to show you that we are

doing something. You'll tell the folks at home, won't you? It hurts us badly to be regarded as cold-blooded opportunists."

"Trust me; I'll tell them!" says the Briton warmly.

And the Get-Together ends.

THE only fact of importance which fails to emerge with sufficient clearness from the foregoing conversation is the fact —possibly the courteous American suppressed it from motives of delicacy — that America is by comparison more pro-Ally than pro-British. The fact is, the American is on the side of right and justice in this War, and earnestly desires to see the Allied cause prevail; but he has a sub-conscious aversion to see-

ing slow-witted, self-satisfied John Bull collect yet another scalp. American relations with France, too, have always been of the most cordial nature; while America's very existence as a separate nation to-day is the fruit of a quarrel with England.

In this regard it may be noted that American school history books are accustomed to paint the England of 1776 in unnecessarily lurid colours. The young Republic is depicted emerging, after an heroic struggle, from the clutches of a tyranny such as that wielded by the nobility of France in the pre-Revolution days. In sober fact, the secession of the American Colonies was brought about by a series of colossal blunders

and impositions on the part of the most muddle-headed ministry that ever mismanaged the affairs of Great Britain —which is saying a good deal. It is probable that, if the elder Pitt had lived a few years longer, the secession would never have occurred. It was only with the utmost reluctance that Washington appealed to a decision by battle. In any case the fact remains that, while in an American school-book the war of 1776 is given first place, correctly enough, as marking the establishment of American nationality, it figures in the English school-book, with equal correctness, as a single regrettable incident in England's long and variegated Colonial history. It is well to bear these

two points of view in mind. Naturally all this makes for degrees of comparison in America's attitude toward the Allies. One might extend the comparison to Russia, and more especially to Japan; but that, mercifully, is outside the scope of our present inquiry.

To America, friendship with France is an historic tradition, as the Statue of Liberty attests, and rests upon the solid foundation of a common ideal —Republicanism. The tie between America and Great Britain is the tie of a common (but rapidly diminishing) blood-relationship; and, as every large family knows, blood-relationship carries with it the right to speak

one's mind with refreshing freedom whenever differences of opinion arise within the family circle. But our idealists have persistently overlooked this handicap. They cling tenaciously to the notion that it is easier to be friendly with your relations than with your friends, and that, in dealing with your own kin, tact may be economized. "Blood is thicker than water," we proclaim to one another across the sea; "and we can therefore afford to be as rude to one another as we please." This principle suits the Briton admirably, because he belongs to the elder and more thick-skinned branch of the clan. But it bears hardly upon a young, self-

conscious, and adolescent nation, which has not yet "found" itself as a whole; and which, though its native genius and genuine promise carry it far, still experiences a certain youthful diffidence under the supercilious condescension of the Old World.

Our mutual relations are further complicated by the possession of a common language.

In theory, a common tongue should be a bond of union between nations—a channel for the interchange of great thoughts and friendly sentiments. In practice, what is it?

Let us take a concrete example. Supposing an American woman and a Dutch

woman live next door to one another in a New York suburb. As a rule they maintain friendly relations; but if at any time these relations become strained—say, over the encroachments of depredatory chickens, or the obstruction of some one's ancient lights by the over-exuberance of some one else's laundry—the two ladies are enabled to say the most dreadful things to one another without any one being a penny the worse. *They do not understand one another's language.* But if they speak a common tongue, the words which pass when the most ephemeral squabble arises stick and rankle.

Again, for many years the people of

Great Britain were extremely critical of Russia. Well-meaning, stay-at-home gentlemen constantly rose to their feet in the House of Commons and made withering remarks on the subject of knouts, and Cossacks, and vodka. But they did no harm. The Russian people do not understand English. In the same way, Russians were probably accustomed to utter equally reliable criticisms of the home-life of Great Britain —land-grabbing, and hypocrisy, and whisky, and so on. But we knew nothing of all this, and all was well. There was not the slightest difficulty, when the great world-crash came, in forming the warmest alliance with Russia.

But as between the two great English-speaking nations of the world, it is in the power of the most foolish politician or the most irresponsible sub-editor, on either side of the Atlantic, to create an international complication with a single spoken phrase or stroke of the pen. And as both countries appear to be inhabited very largely by persons who regard newspapers as Bibles and foolish politicians as inspired prophets, it seems advisable to take steps to regulate the matter.

This brings us to another matter —the attitude of the American Press toward the War. A certain section thereof, which need not be particularized further, has never ceased, prob-

ably under the combined influences of bias and subsidy, to abuse the Allies, particularly the British, and misrepresent their motives and ideals. This sort of journalism "cuts no ice" in the United States. It is just "yellow journalism." *Voilà tout!* Why take it seriously? But the British people do not know this; and as the British halfpenny Press, when it does quote the American Press, rarely quotes anything but the most virulent extracts from this particular class of newspaper, one is reduced yet again to wondering whence the blessings of a common language are to be derived.

But, taking them all round, the news-

papers of America have handled the questions of the War with conspicuous fairness and ability. They are all fundamentally pro-Ally; and the only criticism which can be directed at them from an Allied quarter is that, in their anxiety to give both sides a hearing, they have been a little too indulgent to Germany's claims to moral consideration, and have been a little over-inclined to accept the German Chancellor's pious manifestoes at their face value. But, generally speaking, it may be said that the greater the newspaper, the firmer the stand that it has taken for the Allied cause. The New York *Times*, the weightiest and most authori-

tative newspaper in America, has been both pro-Ally and pro-British throughout the War, and has never shrunk from the delicate task of interpreting satisfactorily to the British people the varying moods of the President.

Journalistic criticism of Great Britain in America is frequently extremely candid, and not altogether unmerited. Occasionally it goes too far; but the occasion usually arises from ignorance of the situation, or the desire to score an epigrammatic point. For instance, during the struggle for Verdun in the spring of last year, a New York newspaper, sufficiently well-conducted to have known better, published a cartoon repre-

senting John Bull as standing aloof, but encouraging the French to persevere in their efforts by parodying Nelson's phrase :—"England expects that every Frenchman will do his duty." The truth, of course, was that Sir Douglas Haig had offered General Joffre all the British help that might be required. The offer was accepted to this extent, that the British took over forty additional miles of trenches from the French, thus setting free many divisions of French soldiers to participate in a glorious and purely French victory.

But this sort of foolish calumny dies hard, together with such phrases as :—"England is prepared to hold on, to

the last Frenchman!" While not strictly relevant to our present discussion, the following figures may be of interest. In August 1914 the British Regular Army consisted of about a hundred and fifty thousand men. To-day, British troops in France alone number two million, without counting those in Salonica, in Egypt, and in Mesopotamia. The Navy absorbs another four hundred thousand, while a full million are occupied in purely naval construction and repair. And at home, again, enormous masses of new troops are undergoing training. This seems to dispose of the suggestion that Great Britain is winning the War by proxy.

And for the upkeep of this mighty

host, and for this general comforting of the Allies, the British taxpayer is now paying cheerfully and willingly, in addition to such trifling impositions as a 60 per cent. tax on his commercial profits, income tax at the rate of twenty-five cents in the dollar.

On the other side of the account, *Life*—the American equivalent of *Punch*, if it is possible for the humour of a particular nation to find its equivalent in any other nation—published not long ago a special "John Bull" number, which will for ever remain a monument of journalistic generosity and international courtesy. *Life's* good deed was gracefully acknowledged by *Punch* and *The Spectator*.

But, in spite of *Life's* good example, enough has been said under this head to illuminate the fact that a common language is a doubtful blessing. The joint possession of the tongue that Shakespeare and Milton and Longfellow and Abraham Lincoln spoke has bestowed little upon our two nations but a convenient medium, too often, for shrewish altercation, coupled with the profound conviction of either side that the other side is unable to speak correct English.

Well, this nonsense must stop.

THEREFORE, whenever a true American and a true Briton get together, let them hold an international symposium of their own. If it were not for the unfortunate interposition of the Atlantic Ocean, this interview would be extended, with proportional profit, to the greatest symposium the world has ever seen. Meanwhile, we will make shift with a company of two.

The following counsel is respectfully offered to the participants in the debate.

Let the Briton remember—

1. That you are talking to a *friend.*

2. Remember you are talking to a man who regards his nation as the greatest nation in the world. He will probably tell you this.

3. Remember you are talking to a man whose country has made an enormous contribution to your cause in men, material, and money, besides putting up with a good deal of inconvenience and irksome supervision at your hands. Remember, too, that your own country has made little or no acknowledgement of its indebtedness in this matter.

4. Remember you are talking to a man who believes in "publicity," and

who believes, further, that if you do not advertise the fact, you cannot possibly be in possession of "the goods." So for goodness' sake open up a little, and tell him all you can about what the British Nation is doing to-day for Humanity and Civilization—in other words, for America.

5. Remember this man is not so impervious to criticism as you are. Don't over-criticize his apparent attitude to the War. Remember you are talking to a man whose patience under such outrages as the sinking of the *Lusitania*, has been strained to the uttermost; so don't ask him whether he is too proud to fight, or he may offer you convincing proof to the contrary.

6. Remember you are talking to a man whose business has been considerably interfered with by the stringency of the Allied blockade. So don't invite him to wax enthusiastic over the vigilance of the British Navy or the promptness of the Censor in putting the mails through.

7. And do try to disabuse the man's mind of the preposterous, Germany-fostered notion that your country regards this War merely as a vehicle for commercial aggrandizement, or that the British Foreign Office proposes to maintain the Black List and other bugbears after the War. It seems absurd that you should have to give such an assurance, but doubts upon the subject

certainly exist in certain quarters in America to-day.

Let the American remember—

1. That you are talking to a *friend.*

2. Remember you are talking to a man who regards his nation as the greatest in the world. He will not tell you this, because he takes it for granted that you know already.

3. Remember you are talking to a man who is a member of a traditionally reticent and unexpansive race; who says about one-third of what he feels; who is obsessed by a mania for understating his country's case, exaggerating its weaknesses, and belittling its efforts; who is secretly shy, so covers up his

shyness with a cloak of aggressiveness which is offensive to those who are not prepared for it. Remember that this attitude is not specially assumed for *you*: as often as not the man employs it towards his own wife, who rather enjoys it, because she regards it as a symptom of affection.

4. Remember you are talking to a man who is fighting for his life. To-day his face is turned toward Central Europe, and his back to the United States. Do not expect him to display an intimate or sympathetic understanding of America's true attitude to the War. He is conducting the War according to his lights, and is prepared to abide by the consequences of what

he does. So he is apt to be resentful of criticism. Bear with him, for he is having a tough time of it.

5. Enemy propaganda to the contrary, remember that this man is not a hypocrite. He is occasionally stupid; he is at times obstinate; he is frequently high-handed; and often he would rather be misunderstood than explain. But he is neither tyrannical nor corrupt. He went into this War because he felt it his duty to do so, and not because he coveted any Teutonic vineyard.

6. Remember that your nation has done a great deal for this man's nation during the War. Tell him all about it: it will interest him, *because he did not know.*

PRACTICALLY every one in this world improves on closer acquaintance. The people with whom we utterly fail to agree are those with whom we never get into close touch.

Individual Americans and Britons, when they get together in one country or the other, usually develop a genuine mutual liking. As nations, however, their attitude to one another is too often a *distant* attitude—a distance of some three thousand miles, or the exact

width of the Atlantic Ocean—and ranges from a lofty tolerance in good times to unreserved bickering in bad. Why? Because they are geographically too far apart. But with the shrinkage of the earth's surface produced by the effects of electricity and steam, that geographical abyss yawns much less widely than it did. So let us get together, whether in couples or in millions. The thing has to be done. No rearrangement of the world's affairs after the War can be either just or equitable or permanent which does not find Great Britain and the United States of America upon the same side. What we want is common ground, and a sound basis of un-

derstanding. Our present basis—the "Hands-across-the-Sea, Blood-is-thicker than-Water basis—is sloppy and unstable. Besides, it profoundly irritates that not inconsiderable section of the American people which does not happen to be of British descent.

We can find a better basis than that. What shall it be? Well, we have certain common ideals which rest upon no sentimental foundations, but upon the bedrock of truth and justice. We both believe in God; in personal liberty; in a Law which shall be inflexibly just to rich and poor alike. We both hate tyranny and oppression and intrigue; and we both love things which are clean, and wholesome, and of good

report. Let us take one common stand upon these.

We must take certain precautions. We must bear and forbear. We must forget a good deal that is past. We must make allowances for point of view and differences of temperament. And we must mutually and heroically refrain from utilizing the unrivalled opportunities for repartee and pettiness afforded by the possession of a common tongue.

Of course, we must not expect or attempt to work together in unison. National differences of character and standpoint forbid. And no bad thing either. Unison is a cramping and irksome business. Let us work in harmony

instead, which is far better. And so—to paraphrase the deathless words of the greatest of Americans: With charity toward all, with malice toward none, with mutual understanding and confidence, we shall go forward together, to bind up the wounds of the world, and prevent for all time a repetition of the outrage which inflicted them.

Printed in Great Britain by Hazell, Watson & Viney, Ld., London and Aylesbury.

00099346

Digitized with financial assistance from

HT Parekh FOUNDATION

An Initiative by HDFC WITH YOU, RIGHT THROUGH

on 27 November, 2018